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1893



THE GREAT REMEMBRANCE

AND OTHER POEMS BY
RICHARD WATSON GILDER

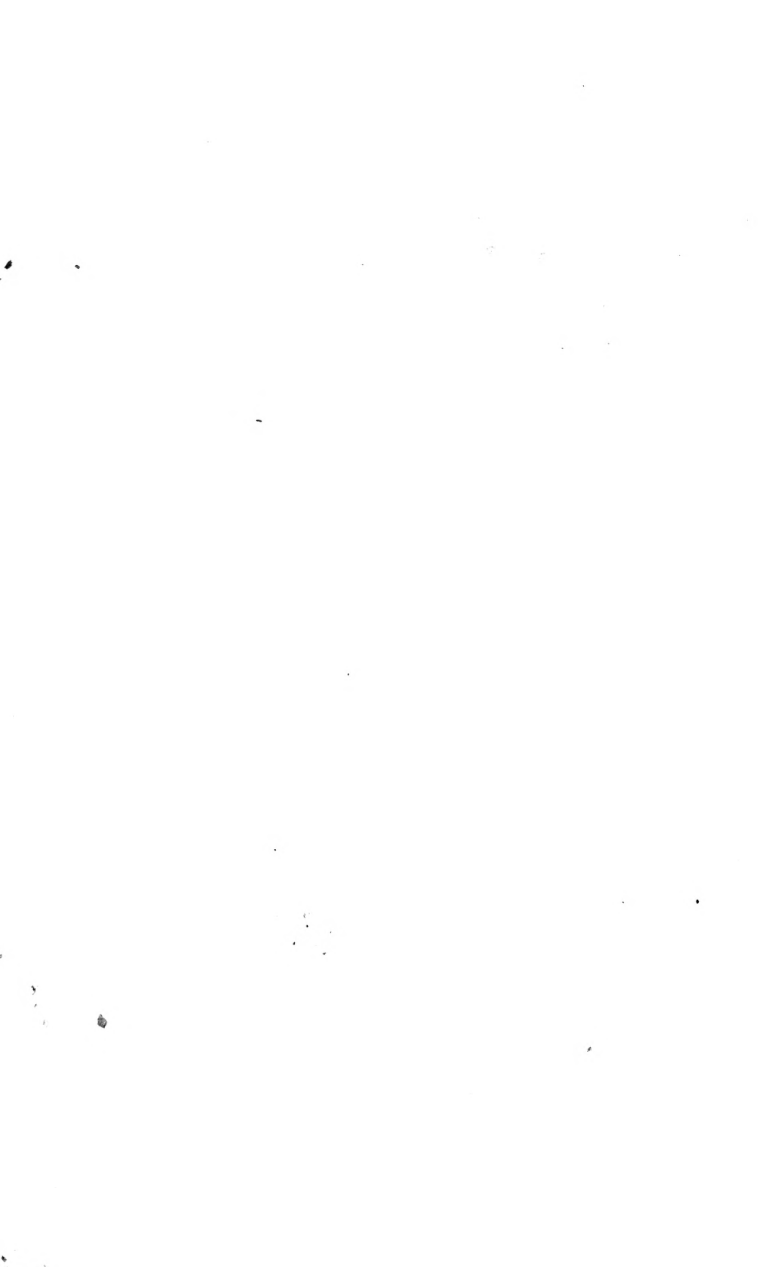
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



THE GREAT REMEMBRANCE
AND OTHER POEMS

By R. W. GILDER

- I. THE NEW DAY
- II. THE CELESTIAL PASSION
- III. LYRICS
- IV. TWO WORLDS, AND OTHER POEMS
- V. THE GREAT REMEMBRANCE, AND OTHER POEMS

THE GREAT REMEMBRANCE
AND OTHER POEMS ❀ BY
RICHARD WATSON GILDER



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1893

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DECORATIONS BY H. DE K.



I

THE GREAT REMEMBRANCE



THE GREAT REMEMBRANCE

READ AT THE ANNUAL REUNION OF THE SOCIETY OF
THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, FANEUIL HALL, BOSTON,
JUNE 27, 1893

COMRADES, the circle narrows, heads grow white,
As once more by the camp-fire's flaring light
We gather and clasp hands, as we have done
These many, many years. So long ago
A part we were of all that glorious show,—
Stood, side by side, 'neath the red battle-sun,—
So long ago we breathed war's thunderous breath,
Knew the white fury of that life-in-death,
So long ago that troubled joy, it seems
The valorous pageant might resolve to splendid dreams.

But no! Too deep 't is burned into the brain!
As well were lightning-scar by summer rain
Washed clean away, when stroke on blinding stroke
Hath torn the rock, and riven the blackened oak.

How oft as down these peaceful streets we pass
All vanishes save, lo! the rutted grass,
Wrecked caissons, frightened beasts, and, merciful God!
The piteous burden of the ensanguined sod!

Yet not all terror doth the memory save
From war's emblazonry and open grave:
In glimpses, flashing like a meteor's light,
We see the army marching in the night;
Or, look! a thousand tents gleam through the black;
Or, now, where quick-built camp-fires flame and crack,
From blaze to shade men stretch o'erwearied limbs,
Chant songs, or wake the hills with chorused hymns;
Or, ere the dawn makes pale the starry dark,
The fiery signals, spark on trailing spark,
Write on the silent sky their still command,
While the great army moves, as by a single hand.

So LONG ago it seems, so long ago,
Behold, our sons, grown men since those great days,—
Born since the last clear bugle ceased to blow
Its summons down the valley; since the bays
Shook with the roar of fort and answering fleet,—
Our very children look into our eyes
And find strange records, with a mute surprise,
As they some curious traveler might greet
Who kept far countries in his musing mind,
Beyond the weltering seas, the mountain-walls behind.

And yet it was this land, and not another,
Where blazed war's flames and rolled the battle-cloud.
In all this land there was no home where brother,
Father, or son hurried not forth; where bowed
No broken-hearted woman when pale Death
Laid his cold finger on the loved one's breath.

LIKE to a drama did the scene unroll,—
Some dark, majestic drama of the soul,
Wherein all strove as actors, hour by hour,
Yet breathless watched the whole swift, tragic play.
Faithful did each his little part essay,

Urged to an end unknown by one all-knowing Power;
While if the drama pauses, now and then,
On the huge stage, 't is for a moment only,—
Here at the heart or in some vista lonely,
A single hero or a million men,—
And with the tragic theme the world resounds again.

First,—in the awful waiting came the shock,
The shame unbearable,—the sacred flag assailed—
Assailed in freedom's name by those who freedom
mock!

Ah, then the oath, to stand as stands the rock
'Gainst flood and tempest, lest that flag be trailed
And torn, or any star therefrom be lost—
The oath, murmured alone, or where the crowd,
As by a wind of heaven swept and tost,
Passioned its soul to God, and strong men wept aloud.

Then sweet farewell; O bitter-sweet farewell,
O brave farewell! Who were the bravest then,
Or they who went, or waited—women or men?
They who the cheers heard, or the funeral knell?
They who stepped proudly to the rattling drum,
Inflamed by war's divine delirium,

Or they who knew no mad joy of the fight,
And yet breathed on through waiting day and weep-
ing night?

FAREWELL and forward! O to live it over,
The first wild heart-beat of heroic hours!
Forward, like mountain-torrents after showers!
Forward to death, as to his bride the lover!
Forward, till quick recoils the impetuous flood,
And ends the first dread scene in terror and in blood!

Onward once more, through sun and shivering
storm,—

A monstrous length with wavering bulk enorm,—
Wounded or striking, bringing blood or bleeding,
Onward, still on, the agony unheeding!
Onward with failing heart, or courage high!
Onward through heat, and hunger, and dismay,
Turning the starry night to murderous day!
Onward, with hope appalled, once more to strike,
and die!

SO MARCHED, so fought, so agonized, the hosts;
Battling through forests; rotting where slow crawls
The deathly swamp-stream; and like pallid ghosts
Haunting the hospitals, and loathèd prison-walls.
They knew what freedom was, and right to breathe
Clean air who burrowed from the filth and seethe
Of foulest pens, only that dogs might track,
And to the death-pit drag their living corpses back.

Oh, would to Heaven some sights could fade from
out

Clear memory's all too melancholy page—
Fade and be gone forever! Let the shout
Of victory only linger, and the rage
And glory of battle over land and sea,
And all that noblest is in war's fierce pageantry.

Echoes of deeds immortal, O awake,
Tremble to language, into music break,
Till lyric memory takes the old emotion,
And leaps from heart to heart the ancient thrill!
Tell of great deeds that yet the wide earth fill:
How first upon the amazèd waves of ocean
The black, infernal, deadly armored-ships

Together rushed, and all the world stood still,
While a new word of war burst from those iron lips;
How up the rivers thundered the strong fleets;
How the great captains 'gainst each other dashed
Gigantic armies. What wild welcome meets
Some well-loved chief who, ere those armies clashed,
Rides like a whirlwind the embattled line,
Kindling the stricken ranks to bravery divine!
And, hark, at set of sun, the cheer that greets
Victorious news from far-off armies, flashed
From camp to camp, with roar on answering roar,
Like bellowing waves that track the tempest down the
shore.

But chiefly tell of that one hour of all
When threatening war rolled highest its full tide,
Even to the perilous northern mountain-side
Where Heaven should bid our good cause rise or fall.
Tell of that hour, for never in all the world
Was braver army against braver hurled.
To both the victory, all unawares,
Beyond all dreams of losing or of winning;
For the new land which now is ours and theirs,

Had on that topmost day its glorious beginning.
They who charged up that drenched and desperate
 slope
Were heroes all—and looked in heroes' eyes!
Ah! heroes never heroes did despise!
That day had Strife its bloodiest bourn and scope;
Above the shaken hills and sulphurous skies
Peace lifted up her mournful head and smiled on
 Hope.

RUSHED the great drama on its tragic way
Swift to the happy end from that tremendous day.
Happy, indeed, could memory lose her power
And yield to joy alone the glad, triumphant hour;
Happy if every aching heart could shun
Remembrance of the unreturning one;
If at the Grand Review, when mile on mile
And day on day the marching columns passed,
Darkened not o'er the world the shadow vast
Of his foul murder,—he the free from guile,
Sad-hearted, loving, and beloved, and wise,
Who ruled with sinewy hands and dreaming eyes.

What soul that lived then who remembers not
The hour, the landscape, ah! the very spot—
Hateful for aye—where news that he was slain
Fell like a hammer on the dazed brain!

So LONG ago it was, so long ago,
All, all have passed; the terror and the splendor
Have turned like yesterevening's stormy glow
Into a sunset memory strange and tender.
How beautiful it seems, what lordly sights,
What deeds sublime, what wondrous days and nights,
What love of comrades, ay, what quickened breath,
When first we knew that, startled, quailing, still
We too, even we, along the blazing hill—
We, with the best, could face and conquer death!

GLORIOUS all these, but these all less than naught
To the one passion of those days divine—
Love of the land our own hearts' blood had bought:
Our country, our own country, yours and mine,
Then known, then sternly loved, first in our lives.
Ah, loved we not our children, sisters, wives?

But our own country, this was more than they,—
Our wives, our children, this,—our hope, our love
For all most dear, but more—the dawning day
Of freedom for the world: the hope above
All hope for the sad race of man. For where,
In what more lovely world, 'neath skies more fair,
If freedom here should fail, could it find soil and air?

In this one thought, one passion,—whate'er fate
Still may befall,—one moment we were great!
One moment in life's brief, perplexèd hour
We climbed the height of being, and the power
That falls alone on those who love their kind
A moment made us one with the Eternal Mind.

ONE moment, ah, not so, dear Country! Thou
Art still our passion; still to thee we bow
In love supreme! Fairer than e'er before
Art thou to-day—from golden shore to shore
The home of freemen. Not one stain doth cling
Now to thy banner. Argosies of war
On thy imperial rivers bravely fling
Flags of the nations, but no message bring

Save of peace only; while, behold, from far
The Old World comes to greet thy natal star
That with the circling century returns,
And in the Western heavens with fourfold beauty burns.

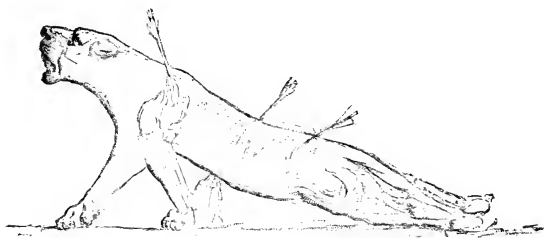
LAND that we love! Thou Future of the World!
Thou refuge of the noble heart oppressed!
Oh never be thy shining image hurled
From its high place in the adoring breast
Of him who worships thee with jealous love!
Keep thou thy starry forehead as the dove
All white, and to the eternal Dawn inclined!
Thou art not for thyself but for mankind,
And to despair of thee were to despair
Of man, of man's high destiny, of God!
Of thee should man despair, the journey trod
Upward, through unknown eons, stair on stair,
By this our race, with bleeding feet and slow,
Were but the pathway to a darker woe
Than yet was visioned by the heavy heart
Of prophet.

COMRADES, see, the fire burns low,
And darkness thickens. Soon will our brief part
On earth forever end, and we shall go
To join the unseen ranks; nor will we swerve
Or fear, when to the silent, great reserve
At last we ordered are—as one by one
Our Captains have been called, their labors done,
To rest and wait in the Celestial Field.
Ay, year by year, we to the dead did yield
Our bravest. Them we followed to the tomb
Sorrowing; for they were worthy of our love,
High-souled and generous, loving peace above
War and its glories: therefore lives no gloom
In this our sorrow; rather pride, and praise,
And gratitude, and memory of old days.

A little while and these tired hands will cease
To lift obedient or in war or peace,—
Faithful we trust in peace as erst in war;
And on the scroll of peace some triumphs are
Noble as battles won; though less resounds
The fame, as deep and bitter are the wounds.

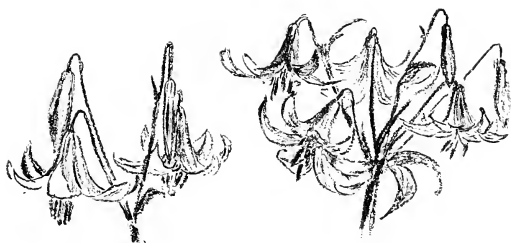
But now the fire burns low, and we must sleep

Ere long, while other eyes than ours the vigil keep.
And after we are gone, to other eyes
That watch below shall come, in starry skies,
A fairer dawn, whereon in fiery light
The Eternal Captain shall his signals write;
And shaken from rest, and gazing at that sign,
On shall the mighty Nation move, led by a hand divine.



II

“THE WHITE CITY,” ETC.



“THE WHITE CITY”

I

GREECE was ; Greece is no more.
Temple and town
Have crumbled down :
Time is the fire that hath consumed them all,
Statue and wall
In ruin strew the universal floor.

II

Greece lives, but Greece no more !
Its ashes breed
The undying seed

Blown westward till, in Rome's imperial towers,
Athens reflowers;
Still westward—lo, a veiled and virgin shore!

III

Say not, "Greece is no more."
Through the clear morn
On light winds borne
Her white-winged soul sinks on the New World's breast.
Ah! happy West—
Greece flowers anew, and all her temples soar!

IV

One bright hour, then no more
Shall to the skies
These columns rise.
But though art's flower shall fade, again the seed
Onward shall speed,
Quickening the land from lake to ocean's roar.

v

Art lives, though Greece may never
From the ancient mold
As once of old
Exhale to heaven the inimitable bloom;
Yet from that tomb
Beauty walks forth to light the world forever!

THE VANISHING CITY

I

ENRAPTURED memory, and all ye powers of being,
To new life waken! Stamp the vision clear
On the soul's inmost substance. Oh, let seeing
Be more than seeing; let the entrancèd ear
Take deep these surging sounds, inweaved with light
Of unimagined radiance; let the intense
Illumined loveliness that thrills the night
Strike in the human heart some deeper sense!
So shall these domes that meet heaven's curvèd blue,
And yon long, white imperial colonnade,
And many-columned peristyle endue
The mind with beauty that shall never fade:
Though all too soon to dark oblivion wending—
Reared in one happy hour to know as swift an ending.

II

Thou shalt of all the cities of the world

Famed for their grandeur, ever more endure
Imperishably and all alone imperaled

In the world's living thought, the one most sure
Of love undying and of endless praise

For beauty only — chief of all thy kind;
Immortal, even because of thy brief days;

Thou cloud-built, fairy city of the mind!
Here man doth pluck from the full tree of life

The latest, lordliest flower of earthly art;
This doth he breathe, while resting from his strife,

This presses he against his weary heart;
Then, wakening from his dream within a dream,
He flings the faded flower on Time's down-rushing
stream.

III

Oh, never as here in the eternal years

Hath burst to bloom man's free and soaring spirit,
Joyous, untrammelled, all untouched by tears

And the dark weight of woe it doth inherit.

Never so swift the mind's imaginings

Caught sculptured form, and color. Never before —
Save where the soul beats unembodied wings

'Gainst viewless skies — was such enchanted shore
Jeweled with ivory palaces like these:

By day a miracle, a dream by night;
Yet real as beauty is, and as the seas

Whose waves glance back keen lines of glittering light
When million lamps, and coronets of fire,
And fountains as of flame, to the bright stars aspire.

IV

Glide, magic boat, from out the green lagoon,

'Neath the dark bridge, into this smiting glow
And unthought glory. Even the glistening moon

Hangs in the nearer splendor.—Let not go
The scene, my soul, till ever 't is thine own!

This is Art's citadel and crown. How still
The innumerable multitudes from every zone,

That watch and listen; while each eye doth fill
With joyous tears unwept. Now solemn strains
Of brazen music give the waiting soul

Voice and a sigh—it other speech disdains,
Here where the visual sense faints to its goal!
Ah, silent multitudes, ye are a part
Of the wise architect's supreme and glorious art!

v

O joy almost too high for saddened mortal!
O ecstasy envisioned! Thou shouldst be
Lasting as thou art lovely; as immortal
As through all time the matchless thought of thee!
Yet would we miss, then, the sweet, piercing pain
Of thy inconstancy! Could we but banish
This haunting pang, ah, then thou wouldst not reign
One with the golden sunset that doth vanish
Through myriad lingering tints down melting skies;
Nor the pale mystery of the New World flower
That blooms once only, then forever dies—
Pouring a century's wealth on one dear hour.
Then vanish, City of Dream, and be no more;
Soon shall this fair Earth's self be lost on the un-
known shore.

THE TOWER OF FLAME

THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, JULY 10, 1893

I

HERE for the world to see men brought their fairest,
Whatever of beauty is in all the earth;
The priceless flower of art, the loveliest, rarest,
Here by our inland ocean came to glorious birth.

II

Yet on this day of doom a strange new splendor
Shed its celestial light on all men's eyes:
Flower of the hero-soul,—consummate, tender,—
That from the tower of flame sprang to the eternal
skies.

LOWELL

I

FROM the shade of the elms that murmured above thy
birth
And the pines that sheltered thy life and shadowed
the end,
'Neath the white-blue skies thee to thy rest we
bore,—
'Neath the summer skies thou didst love, 'mid the
songs of thy birds,
By thy childhood's stream, 'neath the grass and the
flowers thou knewest,
Near the grave of the singer whose name with thine
own is enlaureled,
By the side of the brave who live in thy deathless
song,—
Here all that was mortal of thee we left, with our
tears,
With our love, and our grief that could not be
quenched or abated:

For even the part that was mortal, sweet friend and
companion!

That face, and that figure of beauty, and flashing eye
Which in youth shone forth like a god's 'mid lesser men,
And in gray-haired, strenuous age still glowed and
lustered,—

These, too, were dear to us,—blame us not, soaring
spirit!

These, too, were dear—and now we shall never be-
hold them,

Nor ever shall feel the quick clasp of thy welcoming
hand.

II

But not for ourselves alone are we spent in grieving,—
For the stricken Land we mourn whose light is dark-
ened,

Whose soul in sorrow went forth in the night-time
with thine.

Lover and laureate thou of the wide New World,
Whose pines, and prairies, and people, and teeming soil,
Where was shaken of old the seed of the freedom of
men,

Thou didst love as a strong man loveth the maiden
 he woos,—
Not the woman he toys with, and sings to, and, pass-
 ing, forgets,—
Whom he woos, whom he wins, whom he weds, his
 passion, his pride,
Who no shadow of wrong shall suffer, who shall stand
 in his sight
Pure as the sky of the evil her foeman may threat,
Save by word or by thought of her own in her white-
 ness untouched,
And wounded alone of the lightning her spirit engen-
 ders.

III

Take of thy grief new strength, new life, O Land!
Weep no more he is lost, but rejoice and be glad for-
 ever
That thy lover who died was born, for thy pleasure,
 thy glory,—
While his love and his fame light ever thy climbing
 path.

August 14, 1891.

THE SILENCE OF TENNYSON

WHEN that great shade into the silence vast
Through thinking silence passed;
When he, our century's soul and voice, was hushed,
We who,—appalled, bowed, crushed,—
Within the holy moonlight of his death
Waited the parting breath —
Ah, not in song
Might we our grief prolong.
Silence alone, O golden spirit fled!
Silence alone could mourn that silence dread.

ON THE DEATH OF A GREAT MAN

WHEN from this mortal scene
A great soul passes to the vast unknown,
Let not in hopeless grief the spirit groan.
Death comes to all, the mighty and the mean.
If by that death the whole world suffers loss,
This be the proof (and lighter thus our cross),
That he for whom the world doth sorely grieve
Greatly hath blessed mankind in that he once
did live.

Then, at the parting breath
Let men praise Life, nor idly blame dark Death.

FAME

FAME is an honest thing,
It is deceived not;
It passes by the palace gates
Where the crowned usurper waits,
Enters the peasant-poet's cot
And cries — "Thou art the king!"

A MONUMENT BY ST. GAUDENS

THIS is not Death, nor Sorrow, nor sad Hope;
Nor Rest that follows strife. But, oh more dread!
'T is Life, for all its agony serene;
Immortal, and unmournful, and content.

A MEMORY OF RUBINSTEIN

HE of the ocean is, its thunderous waves
Echo his music; while far down the shore
Mad laughter hurries,—a white, blowing spume.
I hear again in memory that wild storm:
The winds of heaven go rushing round the world,
And broods above the rage one sphinx-like face.

“HOW PADEREWSKI PLAYS”

I

If words were perfume, color, wild desire ;
If poet's song were fire
That burned to blood in purple-pulsing veins ;
If with a bird-like thrill the moments throbbed to
hours ;

If summer's rains
Turned drop by drop to shy, sweet, maiden flowers ;
If God made flowers with light and music in them,
And saddened hearts could win them ;
If loosened petals touched the ground
With a caressing sound ;

If love's eyes uttered word
No listening lover e'er before had heard ;
If silent thoughts spake with a bugle's voice ; .
If flame passed into song and cried, “ Rejoice ! Re-
joice ! ”

If words could picture life's, hope's, heaven's eclipse
When the last kiss has fallen on dying eyes and lips;
If all of mortal woe

Struck on one heart with breathless blow on blow;

If melody were tears, and tears were starry gleams
That shone in evening's amethystine dreams;

Ah, yes, if notes were stars, each star a different hue,
Trembling to earth in dew;

Or if the boreal pulsings, rose and white,

Made a majestic music in the night;

If all the orbs lost in the light of day

In the deep, silent blue began their harps to play;

And when in frightening skies the lightnings flashed
And storm-clouds crashed,

If every stroke of light and sound were but excess
of beauty;

If human syllables could e'er refashion
That fierce electric passion;

If other art could match (as were the poet's duty)

The grieving, and the rapture, and the thunder

Of that keen hour of wonder,—

That light as if of heaven, that blackness as of hell,—

How Paderewski plays then might I dare to tell.

II

How Paderewski plays! And was it he
Or some disbodied spirit that had rushed
From silence into singing; that had crushed
Into one startled hour a life's felicity,
And highest bliss of knowledge — that all life, grief,
 wrong,
Turn at the last to beauty and to song!

THE ACTOR

I

GLORIOUS that ancient art! —

In thine own form to show the fire and fashion
Of every age and clime, of every passion
That dwells in man's deep heart!

II

Actor, act well, not meanly,
Thy part in life, as on the mimic stage!
From highest thought is born art's noblest rage:
Live, act, end all, serenely!

THE STRICKEN PLAYER

WHEN at life's last the stricken player lies,
When throng before his darkened, dreaming eyes
His soul's companions: which more real then —
The human comrades, the live women and men
Of the large world he knew, or the ideal
Imagined creatures his own art made real,—
Wherein he poured his spirit's very being,
His soul and body? Are those dim eyes seeing
Himself as one of Shakespeare's men? Are maids
And queens he wooed, the kings he was, or knew
Upon the tragic stage,—are these the shades
That now his visionary hours pursue,
Attendant on his passing? Listen near!
What breathèd murmurs 'scape those pallid lips
To which the nations hearkened, ere the eclipse
Of all that brightness? Now lean close and hear;
Ah, see that look, sweeter than when he smiled
Upon the applauding world,—while *she* draws near
And hears a dear voice whisper, "Child, my Child!"

ELEONORA DUSS

IF ever flashed upon this mortal scene
A soul unsheathed, a pale, trembling flame,
That suffered every gust, and yet did cling
With fire unquenchable—it is thine own,
Thou artist of the real! Unto thee
No mirth of life is secret; but, sweet soul,
With what sure art thou picturest human woe!
How natural tears to those Italian eyes—
Shadowing in untold depths whatever grief
Familiar is to mortals!

KELP ROCK

“Rock ’s the song-soil,” truly
(So sang one bard of power);
Therefore *our* poet duly
Built on this rock his tower.
And therefore in his singing
We hear the storm-bell ringing,
The siren’s piercing warning
Through misty eve and morning,
The sea-winds roaring, sighing,
The long waves rising, falling,
We hear the herons calling,
The clashing waves replying.

AT NIAGARA

I

THERE at the chasm's edge behold her lean
Trembling as, 'neath the charm,
A wild bird lifts no wing to 'scape from harm;
Her very soul drawn to the glittering, green,
Smooth, lustrous, awful, lovely curve of peril;
While far below the bending sea of beryl
Thunder and tumult—whence a billowy spray
Enclouds the day.

II

What dream is hers? No dream hath wrought that spell!
The long waves rise and sink;
Pity that virgin soul on passion's brink,
Confronting Fate,—swift, unescapable,—
Fate, which of nature is the intent and core,
And dark and strong as the steep river's pour,
Cruel as love, and wild as love's first kiss!
Ah, God! the abyss!

THE CHILD-GARDEN

IN the child-garden buds and blows
A blossom lovelier than the rose.

If all the flowers of all the earth
In one garden broke to birth,

Not the fairest of the fair
Could with this sweet bloom compare ;

Nor would all their shining be
Peer to its lone bravery.

Fairer than the rose, I say ?
Fairer than the sun-bright day

In whose rays all glories show,
All beauty is, all blossoms blow.

What this blossom, fragrant, tender,
That outbeams the rose's splendor,—

Purer is, more tinct with light
Than the lily's flame of white?

Of beauty hath this flower the whole.
And its name—the Human Soul!

While beside it deeply shine
Blooms that take its light divine:

The perilous sweet flower of Hope
Here its hiding eyes doth ope,

And Gentleness doth near uphold
Its healing leaves and heart of gold;

Here tender fingers push the seed
Of Knowledge; pluck the poisonous weed;

Here blossoms Joy one singing hour,
And here of Love the immortal flower.

A CHILD

I

HER voice was like the song of birds;
Her eyes were like the stars;
Her little waving hands were like
Bird's wings that beat the bars.

II

And when those waving hands were still,—
Her soul had fled away,—
The music faded from the air,
The color from the day.

TWO VALLEYS

YES, 't is a glorious sight,
This valley, that mountain height.

The river plunges and roars
Like the wild sea on its shores

What time in waves enorm
Breaks the gigantic storm.

The wooded mount doth climb
To a thought intense, sublime.

The glory of all I feel;
But my heart, my heart, will steal

Down the journey of years,
Through the vale of life, and of tears,

Far back to the least of valleys
Where a slow brook curves and dallies,

Where a boy, in the twilight gleam,
Walks alone with his dream.

ON THE BAY

THIS watery vague how vast! This misty globe,
Seen from this center where the ferry plies,—
It plies, but seems to poise in middle air,—
Soft gray below gray heavens, and in the west
A rose-gray memory of the sunken sun;
And, where gray water touches grayer sky,
A band of darker gray pricked out with lights,—
A diamond-twinkling circlet bounding all;
And where the statue looms, a quenchless star;
And where the lighthouse, a red, pulsing flame;
While the great bridge its starry diadem
Shows through the gray, itself in grayness lost!

INDIRECTION

I SAW not the leaf

But its shadow trembling, trembling down.

I faced to Northward, to my grief,

When from the Southern sky a crimson meteor lit
the star-dark town.

I saw not naked Love

Lean from his porphyry throne above

And touch her heart to flame,

Yet on her brow I saw the swift, sweet, virgin shame.

“AH, BE NOT FALSE ”

I

AH, be not false, sweet Splendor!
Be true — be good.
Be wise as thou art tender;
Be all that Beauty should.

II

Not lightly be thy citadel subdued;
Not ignobly, not untimely.
Take praise in solemn mood;
Take love sublimely.

THE ANSWER

THROUGH starry space two angels dreamed their
flight,

'Mid worlds and thoughts of worlds, through day
and night.

Then one spake forth whose voice was like the flower
That blossoms in the fragrant midnight hour.

This white-browed angel of the other asked,

“Of all the essences that ever basked
In the eternal presence; of all things,
All thoughts, all joys, all dreads, all sorrowings
Amid the unimaginable vast,—

Being, or shall be, or forever past,—
Profound with dark, or hid in endless light—
Which of all these most deep and infinite?”

Then did the elder speak, the while he turned
On him who asked clear eyes that slowly burned
The spirit through, like to a living coal—

“No depth there is so deep as woman's soul.”

HOW DEATH MAY MAKE A MAN

I

DEATH is a sorry plight,
It bringeth unto man
End of all delight.
Yet many a woeful wight
Only dying can
Quit him like a man.

II

Dawdling, drawling, silly,
Maundering, scarce a man,
Driven willy-nilly,
When he 's dying will he
Run as once he ran,
Or quit him like a man?

III

Vile from out the wrack
Crawls he less than man;

Cowering in his track
Beaten, broken, black;
 Curse him if you can —
 Death may make him man.

IV

In life the wretch did naught
 Worthy of a man;
Now by Death he 's caught,
What a change is wrought!
 Whom the world did ban
 Quits life like a man.

V

Braced stiff against the wall,
 Behold, at last, a man.
Lost — life and honor, all!
At Death's quick touch and call
 See, the craven can
 Quit him like a man.

“CAME TO A MASTER OF SONG”

I

CAME to a master of song
And the human heart
One who had followed him long
And worshiped his art ;
One whom the poet's singing
Had lured from death,
Joy to the crushed soul bringing
And Heaven's breath,—

II

Came to him once in an hour
Of terror and stress,
And cried, “Thou alone hast power
To save me and bless ;
Thou alone, pure heart and free,
Canst pluck from disaster —
If to a wretch like me
Thou wilt stoop, O master !”

III

Answered the bard with shame,
And sorrow and trembling,
"Was I false, was my song to blame?
Was my art dissembling?
I of all mortals the saddest,
The quickest to fall,
And song of mine highest and gladdest —
Repentance all!"

MERIDIAN

I

HENCEFORTH before these feet
Sinks the downward way ;
A little while to greet
The light and life of day,
Then night's slow fall
Ends all.

II

Now forward, heart elate,
Though steep the pathway slope.
Time yet for love and hate,
Joy, and joy's shadow — hope,
Ere night's slow fall
Ends all.

III

Still the warm sky is blue,
No fleck the sunlight mars ;

'Twixt hills the sea gleams through;
With twilight come the stars;
And night's slow fall
Ends all.

IV

In the cool-breathing night
The starry sky is deep.
Still on through glimmering light
Till we lie down to sleep,—
Then let night's fall
End all.

EVENING IN TYRINGHAM VALLEY

WHAT domes and pinnacles of mist and fire
Are builded in yon spacious realms of light
All silently, as did the walls aspire
Templing the ark of God by day and night!
Noiseless and swift, from darkening ridge to ridge,
Through purple air that deepens down the day,
Over the valley springs a shadowy bridge.
The evening star's keen, solitary ray
Makes more intense the silence, and the glad,
Unmelancholy, restful, twilight gloom,—
So full of tenderness, that even the sad
Remembrances that haunt the soul take bloom
Like that on yonder mountain.

Now the bars
Of sunset all burn black; the day doth fail,
And the skies whiten with the eternal stars.
Oh, let thy spirit stay with me, sweet vale!

III

A BOOK OF SONGS



A BOOK OF SONGS

“BECAUSE THE ROSE MUST FADE”

I

BECAUSE the rose must fade,
Shall I not love the rose?
Because the summer shade
Passes when winter blows,
Shall I not rest me there
In the cool air?

II

Because the sunset sky
Makes music in my soul,
Only to fail and die,
Shall I not take the whole
Of beauty that it gives
While yet it lives?

III

Because the sweet of youth
Doth vanish all too soon,
Shall I forget, forsooth,
To learn its lingering tune —
My joy to memorize
In those young eyes?

IV

If, like the summer flower
That blooms,— a fragrant death,—
Keen music hath no power
To live beyond its breath,
Then of this flood of song
Let me drink long!

V

Ah, yes, because the rose
Doth fade like sunset skies;
Because rude winter blows
All bare, and music dies —
Therefore, now is to me
Eternity!

“ FADES THE ROSE ”

I

FADES the rose; the year grows old;
The tale is told;
Youth doth depart —
Only stays the heart.

II

-Ah, no! if stays the heart,
Youth can ne'er depart,
—Nor the sweet tale be told —
Never the rose fade, nor the year grow old.

THE WINTRY HEART

I

ON the sad winter trees
The dead, red leaves remain,
Though to and fro the bleak winds blow,
And falls the freezing rain.

II

So to the wintry heart
Clings color of the past,
While through dead leaves shudders and grieves
The melancholy blast.

HAST THOU HEARD THE NIGHTINGALE ?

I

Yes, I have heard the nightingale.
As in dark woods I wandered,
And dreamed and pondered,
A voice passed by all fire
And passion and desire;
I rather felt than heard
The song of that lone bird :
Yes, I have heard the nightingale.

II

Yes, I have heard the nightingale.
I heard it, and I followed;
The warm night swallowed
This soul and body of mine,
As burning thirst takes wine,
While on and on I pressed
Close to that singing breast :
Yes, I have heard the nightingale.

III

Yes, I have heard the nightingale.
Well doth each throbbing ember
The flame remember;
And I—how quick that sound
Turned drops from a deep wound!
How this heart was the thorn
Which pierced that breast forlorn!
Yes, I have heard the nightingale.

“IN THAT DREAD, DREAMED-OF HOUR”

I

IN that dread, dreamed-of hour

When in her heart love's rose flames into flower,
'T is never, never *yes*,

But *no, no, no*, whate'er the startled eyes confess.

II

Her frail denial at last

Swept clean away like burnt leaves in the blast;
No longer *no, no, no!*

But *yes*, forever *yes*, while love's red rose doth blow.

“ROSE-DARK THE SOLEMN SUNSET”

I

ROSE-DARK the solemn sunset
That holds my thought of thee;
With one star in the heavens
And one star in the sea.

II

On high no lamp is lighted,
Nor where the long waves flow,
Save the one star of evening
And the shadow star below.

III

Light of my Life, the darkness
Comes with the twilight dream;
Thou art the bright star shining,
And I but the shadowy gleam.

WINDS TO THE SILENT MORN

I

WINDS to the silent morn;
Waves to the ocean;
Voice to the song unsung;
Song to emotion;
Light to the golden flower;
Bird to the tree;
Love to the heart of love,
And I to thee!

II

Dawn to the darkened world;
Hope to the morrow;
Music to passion; and
Weeping to sorrow;
Love to the heart that longs;
Moon to the sea;
Heaven to the earthborn soul,
And thou to me.

IV

A WEEK'S CALENDAR



A WEEK'S CALENDAR

I

NEW YEAR

EACH New Year is a leaf of our love's rose;
It falls, but quick another roseleaf grows.
So is the flower from year to year the same,
But richer, for the dead leaves feed its flame.

II

A NEW SOUL

To SEE the rose of morning slow unfold
Each wondrous petal to that heart of gold;
To see from out the dark, unknowing night
A new soul dawn with such undreamed-of light,
And slowly all its loveliness and splendor
Pour forth as stately music pours, magnificently
tender!

III

“KEEP PURE THY SOUL ”

KEEP pure thy soul !
Then shalt thou take the whole
Of delight ;
Then, without a pang,
Thine shall be all of beauty whereof the poet
sang —
The perfume, and the pageant, the melody, the
mirth
Of the golden day, and the starry night ;
Of heaven, and of earth.
Oh, keep pure thy soul !

IV

“THY MIND IS LIKE A CRYSTAL BROOK ”

I

THY mind is like a crystal brook
Wherein clean creatures live at ease,
In sun-bright waves or shady nook.
Birds sing above it,
The warm-breathed cattle love it,
It doth sweet childhood please.

II

Accursed be him by whom it were undone,
Or thing or thought whose presence
The birds and beasts would loathly shun,
Would make its crystal waters foully run,
And drive sweet childhood from its pleasance.

v

“ONE DEED MAY MAR A LIFE”

ONE deed may mar a life,
 And one can make it;
Hold firm thy will for strife,
— Lest a quick blow break it!
Even now from far on viewless wing
Hither speeds the nameless thing
 Shall put thy spirit to the test.
Haply or e'er yon sinking sun
 Shall drop behind the purple West
All shall be lost — or won!

VI

THE UNKNOWN

How STRANGE to think upon the life beyond
Our human cognizance with so deep awe
And haunting dread; a sense as of remorse,
A looking-for of judgment, a great weight
Of things unknown to happen! We who live
Blindly from hour to hour in very midst
Of mysteries; of shapeless, changing glooms;
Of nameless terrors; issues vast and black;
Of airy whims, slight fantasies, and flights
That lead to unimaginable woe:
The unweighed word cloying the life of love;
One clod of earth outblotting all the stars;
Some secret, dark inheritance of will,
And the scared soul plunges to conscious doom!
Thou who hast wisdom, fear not Death, but Life!

VII

IRREVOCABLE

WOULD the gods might give
Another field for human strife;
Man must live one life
Ere he learns to live.
— Ah, friend in thy deep grave,
What now can change, what now can save?

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